

Printed from THE DAILY JOURNAL, dtd. 03/16/2010

Pink slips issued to 23,000 teachers

March 16, 2010, 01:12 AM By Bill Silverfarb

More than 23,000 teachers and other school employees across the state have received notices of potential layoffs, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell said yesterday.

Locally, a number of school districts issued pink slips while others have sent out notices of release to its temporary teachers.

More than 16,000 teachers in the state lost their jobs last year and another 10,000 classified school employees lost their jobs in the past two years.

Yesterday was the legal deadline for school districts to send preliminary pink slips to teachers and other certificated school staff in California. The pink slips do not necessarily mean a teacher will lose their job but rather that the job has been identified for potential elimination.



George Metropulos/Special to the Daily Journal
Pink balloons were hung on empty chairs at Central Elementary School in Belmont yesterday to mourn the loss of teachers laid off due to budget constraints.

The Belmont-Redwood Shores School District has issued 31 pink slips to certificated teachers and staff and the San Mateo-Foster City School District identified 95 certificated and administrator positions for potential layoffs. The San Mateo Union High School District did not send out any pink slips to permanent teachers but rather notified its 50 to 60 temporary teachers they may not have a job next school year.

The South San Francisco Unified School District will consider making \$4.67 million in cuts that could lead to larger class sizes and the reduction of 27 teachers.

O'Connell joined with members of the California Teachers Association, California School Employees Association, California State PTA, California Association of School Administrators and California County Superintendents Educational Services Association yesterday in Sacramento to bring light to the potential layoffs.

O'Connell expressed support for Senate Constitutional Amendment 6, authored by state Sen. Joe Simitian, D-Palo Alto.

Simitian's SCA 6 would lower the threshold for a school district to pass a parcel tax from two-thirds to 55 percent.

"It is not a cure-all," Simitian told the Daily Journal yesterday. "If the state won't fund public education adequately, the least we can do is give local communities the tools they need to make local decisions about local needs for local kids."

SCA 6, however, needs two-thirds of the Legislature to approve it before it can be put on a statewide ballot, an effort that has failed in the past.

A group of teachers at Central Elementary School in Belmont met yesterday morning on campus to lament the loss of some of the school's staff by placing pink balloons on empty chairs with photos of the teachers.

George Metropulos, former Belmont mayor, has taught for 25 years and said the current budget crisis has put teachers with tenure at risk of losing their jobs for the first time.

"It is usually forbidden to go after tenured teachers," Metropulos, a teacher at Central Elementary School, said about the Belmont-Redwood Shores School District. "Losing experienced teachers and good mentors to younger teachers will impact consistency."

Belmont-Redwood Shores is a Basic Aid district, meaning it gets its funding from local property tax revenue.

Music classes will be cut and the district is suggesting teachers and staff take six furlough days next year to bridge the roughly \$2.5 million deficit.

"It is a sad day for California and yet another telling sign of why our state budget should not be passed on the backs of

children and schools. I will continue to vote no on all budgets that cut education, lay off teachers, increase class sizes or put the interests of corporations and the rich before the interests of California families," state Sen. Leland Yee, D-San Francisco/San Mateo, said in an e-mail.

The San Mateo County Office of Education is currently doing a survey of all districts in the county, asking them to report about staff reductions last year and this year, and also about proposed reductions for next year, according to Peter Burchyns, special adviser to the board and superintendent.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has proposed another \$2.5 billion cut from schools this year after the state has slashed education funding by \$17 billion over the past two years.

The state's estimated budget deficit this year is near \$20 billion.

Bill Silverfarb can be reached by e-mail: silverfarb@smdailyjournal.com or by phone: (650) 344-5200 ext. 106.